

PLANNING CRITERIA AND PLANNING ISSUES

Planning Criteria

Guidelines are now being developed to assist in preparing the Snake River Resource Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement (Snake River RMP EIS). These guidelines, or planning criteria, serve to

- Identify the scope and parameters of the RMP EIS for the interdisciplinary planning team, the BLM managers, and the public; and insure that planning is focused on planning issues.

Planning criteria are based on standards prescribed by laws and regulations; guidance provided by the BLM Wyoming State Director; analysis of information pertinent to the planning area; and the results of consultation and coordination with the public and governmental agencies.

The planning criteria focus on the preparation of alternatives, the analysis of their effects, and the selection of a preferred alternative.

Criteria for Developing Alternatives

The following will be considered in one or more of the alternatives.

- Management of significant cultural, historic, and scenic resources.
- The protection and enhancement of riparian areas.
- The protection of habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate species and other important plants and animals.
- Identification of lands suitable for sand and gravel mining, motorized vehicle use, rights-of-way construction, and other activities that may result in surface disturbance.
- Identification of lands where rights-of-way construction and other surface-disturbing activities would be avoided.
- Livestock grazing practices that are compatible with other resource management objectives.
- Opportunities for enhancing recreation.
- Opportunities for adjusting landownership to meet goals for resource management and public

access (e.g., transfer land to other public or private ownership).

- Opportunities for maintaining open space.

--The protection and enhancement of natural resources and ecological processes.

–Management of recreational use and designation of special recreation management areas (SRMAs).

Criteria for Analyzing Environmental Consequences

The following potential environmental consequences will be addressed.

- The effects of opening or closing public lands to development.
- Effects of surface-disturbing activities on air and scenic quality, cultural resources, recreational opportunities, vegetation, watershed, and wildlife.
- Effects of recreational activity on cultural resources, recreational experiences, vegetation, watershed, and wildlife.
- Effects of landownership adjustments on recreational opportunities and open space.
- Economic impacts of land use restrictions.
- Effects on private land

Criteria for Selecting the Preferred Alternative

The following considerations will guide selection of the preferred alternative.

- The level of land use restrictions needed to protect resources and keep lands and resources available for public use.
- The potential for the occurrence of mineral resources such as sand, gravel, oil and gas, and gold.
- Consistency with the land use plans, programs, and policies of other federal agencies, state and local governments, and Native American tribes.
- The potential eligibility of public lands along the Snake and Gros Ventre rivers and their tributaries to be included within the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- The protection of habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate species and other important plants and animals.

Planning Issues

The process for developing an RMP EIS begins with identifying the issues (40 CFR 1501.7; 43 CFR 1610.4-1).

Issues express concerns, conflicts, and problems with the existing management of public lands. Frequently, issues are based on how land uses affect resources. Some issues are concerned with how land uses can affect other land uses, or how the protection of resources affect land uses.

The following preliminary planning issues have been identified.

Issue 1: Cooperative Management

Public lands administered by the BLM along the Snake River are interspersed with private and state lands and bounded upstream and downstream by lands administered by the NPS, USFS, and Teton County. Some of the private and state lands are affected by recreational easements administered by the BLM. The Army Corps of Engineers and Teton County also have jurisdictional responsibilities including cooperative maintenance of levees for flood control. Several organizations are interested in cooperating with private landowners and governmental agencies for maintaining open space and public access. Opportunities for cooperation include coordination by BLM, NPS, and USFS in addressing river floating, consideration of landownership adjustments, and leasing public lands for parks and pathways. Other benefits of cooperation could include sharing scientific information and preparing joint studies and recommendations on matters such as wild and scenic river potential.

Issue 2: Recreational Opportunities

Public lands along the Snake River are used by the residents of Teton and surrounding counties for high quality recreation which is both accessible and affordable. Activities include hiking, horseback riding, cross country skiing, boating, fishing, picnicking, and watching wildlife. Recreational use is growing with the result that some public lands might experience crowding and associated resource problems, such as increases in noxious weeds or a decline in recreational experiences. Questions to be addressed in the Snake River RMP EIS involve how best to accommodate the demand for recreation on these public lands, while protecting important natural resources and recreational experiences.

Issue 3: Development of Construction Materials

Special attention is needed to address the mining of sand and gravel in the planning area. These materials are needed primarily to maintain levees along the Snake River for flood control, and for road construction around Jackson Hole. Materials are readily available from public, private, and state lands but are often trucked in from outside the area at high cost to end users. Questions to be addressed in the Snake River RMP EIS include how much mining of sand and gravel is appropriate on public lands, and what conditions should be applied to protect recreational opportunities, watershed resources, and important wildlife habitat.